



Parent Manual

Standards Based Instruction, Assessment and Grading

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INTRODUCTION

At Brookhaven Innovation Academy, we believe effective student learning requires clearly defined standards and authentic learning opportunities. We strive to provide accurate, meaningful, and timely feedback on student progress on both.

Furthermore, we believe that reporting of student learning should reflect student progress toward mastery of key academic concepts and identify multiple pathways to deeper learning.

PHILOSOPHY

The main objective of an elementary progress report is to communicate to parents what students know and are able to do. At Brookhaven Innovation Academy we are committed to providing the best possible information to parents. Research shows that student success is highly correlated with parent involvement in school progress.

Standards-based grading is a way to communicate what students know at a point in time rather than an average of performance over an entire period. It measures a student's performance according to the standards taught rather than comparing student progress to other students.

A standards based approach:

- Indicates what students know and are able to do
- Has scores that reveal a student's progress toward the attainment of an essential standard
- Clearly communicates expectations from the beginning
- Is based on complex tasks, as opposed to rote memory
- Emphasizes the more recent evidence of learning rather than cumulative averages
- Uses multiple formative assessment strategies to measure the learning progress of students
- Is a method of tracking student learning by specific essential standards, rather than by assignment type
- Has a focus solely on proficiency and mastery of the content

BENEFITS OF A STANDARDS BASED APPROACH

For Students:

- Students monitor their own progress toward the achievement of essential standards
- Essential standards are clearly defined and students understand the purpose of the learning experience.
- All assessments are clearly aligned to the essential standards
- Students learn at different rates and will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their proficiency and knowledge of an essential standard
- All students can achieve to their highest potential

For Parents:

- Parents can see exactly what their student knows and is able to do
- Parents can monitor their student's progress
- Parents know in what areas their student needs more support and where their student is being pushed to higher levels

OTHER ELEMENTS OF PROGRESS COMMUNICATION

Although we believe in a standards based system, there are many elements of a comprehensive system of communication of student progress. In August, we will assemble a committee of teachers to create a progress reporting plan and report card format. Progress reporting will include the following elements:

1. Progress reports
2. Standardized assessment reports
3. Phone calls to parents
4. Project Exhibition Nights
5. Personal e-mails to parents
6. Evaluated projects or assignments
7. Teacher Haiku pages – Including Newsletters
8. Parent teacher conferences
9. Student led conferences

Traditional Vs. Standards Based Practices

Traditional	Standards Based
One grade per subject based on an average of all work.	One grade for each standard within a subject.
Based on a % system, criteria often unclear, sometime norm referenced.	Criterion-referenced and proficiency based using a limited number of levels with criteria and targets known to all.
Use an uncertain mix of achievement, attitude, effort and behavior. Use of penalties and extra credit.	Measure only achievement; behaviors reported separately. No penalties or bonuses given.
Includes group scores.	Includes individual evidence only.
Include every score regardless of when it was collected.	Emphasizes the more recent evidence of learning.
Mean used to calculate grade.	Use median, mode, trend data, and professional judgment to determine grades.
Assessments vary in quality. Some evidence comes only from teacher recollection.	Use only quality assessment and carefully record data.
Every score included in grade, regardless of purpose.	Includes only scores related to achievement of standard.
Teacher makes decisions about grading and announces system to students.	Students are involved in process.
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How Progress is Measured and Reported

A four-part scale is used to denote levels of achievement on each standard.

Excels (4)

Proficient (3)

Approaching Proficiency (2)

Well Below Proficiency or Not Yet (1)

“The big switch with standards-based grading is we work by levels, not percentages,” says Ken O’Connor, independent educational consultant and author of *A Repair Kit for Grading: Fifteen Fixes for Broken Grades*. It’s more useful to know that your child has met a standard than that she has a B with 84 percent. Each grade on the report card represents a skill or knowledge standard your child has had the opportunity to learn, so it’s a meaningful snapshot of academic achievement.

The philosophy behind standards-based grading focuses on the collection of multiple pieces of “evidence” of student learning in relation to a specific standard. With multiple pieces of evidence, teachers can get a clearer picture of a student’s progression of learning and intervene before a big test or project is completed. Rather than “averaging” individual scores together, students’ scores will be analyzed to determine growth and improvement towards mastery of a specific skill or content. Therefore, if a student’s score is lower at the beginning of a topic, it does not adversely affect their final grade for the unit. What *will* determine the final grade for each unit is the *progress made* and the *knowledge gained* by the end of the unit.

VIII. Frequently Asked Questions

What evidence determines grades?

Teachers carefully consider the following in determining progress: independent daily written or oral tasks, application of skills, periodic assessments (quizzes, tests), performance tasks, and teacher- student questioning. Students can retest as many times as needed in order to show they know the concept or skill. Consistent descriptive feed- back is given to let students know what improvements are needed and what they are doing right.

The information that provides the most accurate depiction of students’ learning is the most current information. If students demonstrate that past assessment information no longer accurately reflects their learning, that information must be dropped and replaced by new information.

What is the problem with including zeroes in grades?

A zero has a profound effect when combined with the practice of averaging. Zeroes

skew the average and often students find themselves in a situation where it is mathematically impossible to pass a class midway through a grading period. In a standards-based grading system, students can earn credit for demonstrating learning. If a student submits no work or demonstrates no learning, then no credit is assigned. Late work and missing assignments are dealt with and reported separately.

Why is there no extra credit?

Extra credit does not measure learning. In a standards-based system, students are actually able to demonstrate their learning in many different ways and timeframes. In a traditional system in which points determine everything, extra credit and extra points will influence a grade and not reflect any additional learning. For instance, a student that has a 2.0 on a specific learning goal may have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning at the 3.0 level. However, in a traditional system in which extra points are simply added in to the overall grade, extra points can be earned regardless of whether or not learning may have occurred.

How does Standards-Based Grading differ from traditional letter grades?

Standards-based grading informs us what students have actually learned and know. Standards-based grading measures students' knowledge of grade-level content over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance. So, a student might struggle in the beginning of a grading period with new content, but then learn and demonstrate proficient performance by the end of the grading period. In traditional grading, the student's performance for the whole grading period would be averaged and early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with proficient performance later in the course, resulting in a lower grade. In standards-based grading, a student who reaches proficiency would be reported proficient and the grade would reflect current performance level. Ultimately, factors like attendance, effort, work habits, and attitude are reported separately in order to give a more accurate report of student learning progress.

How do teachers hold students accountable for their effort and conduct?

A student's effort and behavior are recorded and reported separately from the academic grade. This approach is based on the idea that not completing work is a behavior issue, not an academic one, so your response should address the student's behavior. For example, if a student has not been completing homework assignments and as a result struggles on an assessment, you should discuss the importance of practice with the student and set goals for future work. You could also require the student to stay after school to complete an assignment or have the student work on it while the rest of the class is engaged in a different task. Finally, you need to regularly provide feedback to the student about their work habits.

What flexibility does a teacher have in assessing a student, such as a student who struggles on an assessment?

The focus in SBL is on the knowledge a student demonstrates through an assessment,

not the product itself, so if a student struggles on an assessment, you have the flexibility to assess that student's knowledge in different ways. For example, if a student has trouble with traditional pencil-and-paper assessments, you could assess that student's knowledge through a verbal assessment or use evidence from class discussions, performance on assigned tasks or other quick, informal assessments to determine the student's level of proficiency.

IX. Additional Resources:

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